Baltic IT&T 2006 Forum: eBaltics

The annual Baltic IT&T 2006 conference is one of the most important IT&T forums in the Baltic Sea region, and major subjects this year were eInclusion, eHealth and eGovernment.

The forum has brought together senior government representatives from the Baltic Sea region and other countries, high level officials and experts from European Commission and international organisations, information society leaders and chief researchers, as well as CEO's and top level executives from ICT companies and other high-ranking delegates. Altogether almost 600 delegates participated at different Forum events (including IST4Balt Workshop "Towards a Knowledge Society"). They represented 27 countries – Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

The event was organised by the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LIKTA) and Data Media Group. The Honorary chairman for the event was the Prime Minister of Latvia, Aigars Kalvītis. The motto of the forum was "Building Effective Partnership Networks".

All of the forum materials, presentations, events and related publications can be found at www.ebaltics.com. Planning is underway already for the "Baltic IT&T 2007 Forum: eBaltics".

The honorary chairman for the international "Baltic IT&T 2006: eBaltics" forum was the prime minister of Latvia, Aigars Kalvītis. On April 6, Kalvītis opened the 10th international conference "Information Technologies and Telecommunications in the Baltic Sea, Central European and Eastern European Region".

At the plenary session, "ICT and the Challenges of Convergence", Paul Timmers, head of the E-inclusion Unit, Directorate General for Information Society and Media, European Commission, talked about E-inclusion policies and priorities in Europe.

The European ICT industry was represented at the forum at the very highest level. Mark MacGann, director-general of EICTA, talked about ICT industry challenges in Europe at the plenary session.

At the plenary Session, Ronald De Bruin, head of the Co-operation and Support Department for ENISA, talked about European collaboration in the area of network and information security.

For the 3rd year, the forum has been supported by the Swedish Administrative Development Agency VERVA. At the E-government session, "Outsourcing and Beyond Business Models for Electronic Government", the opening speech was made by Lena Jönsson, director general of VERVA. She spoke about E-government in the Baltic Sea states.
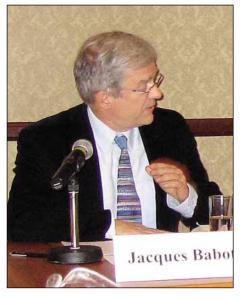
eINCLUSION EXPERTS ROUNDTABLE

In the roundtable participated eInclusion leaders and experts from NeDAP (Northern eDimension Action Plan), European Commission, ICT associations, social projects and community initiatives, as well as information society and Inclusion responsible senior officials from the ministries. Discussion topics included ministerial conference "ICT for an Inclusive Society" in Riga, June, 2006, the book and manifest "Vit@l Society: The New Social Use of ICT", public-private partnership in eInclusion projects in the region and co-ordination of eInclusion activities in the Baltic Sea Region, NeDAP eInclusion action line work plan for 2006-2007. The roundtable was co-organised by the Ministry of Electronic Government Affairs of Latvia, Information Society Development Committee under the Government of Lithuania and Equal transnational partnership "Vit@l Society, Technology for people". The roundtable was opened and chaired by Ina Gudele, Head of the Secretariat of the Ministry of Electronic Government Affairs of Latvia.

E-inclusion sessions were organised under the auspices of the Equal project "Training in Computer and Internet Usage of the Unemployed in Latvia". At the session "E-inclusion Policies and Motivation of Governments and Citizens", Agrita Groza, deputy state secretary for the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, talked about E-inclusion policies and facilitation of the relevant motivations in Latvia.

The Latvia@World project was presented by Professor Imants Freibergs, president of the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LIKTA). He also spoke about true examples of public-private partnership.

Interesting information about E-inclusion in the Netherlands was provided by Syb Groenevald from KnowledgeLand in the Netherlands.

There was a special session at the forum, "International Co-operation for Bridging the Digital Divide". It was chaired by Jacques Babot, sector head, Unit F4: New Working Environment, Information Society and Media DG, European Commission.

Much attention was attracted by the session "E-inclusion Policies and Motivation of Governments and Citizens". Speakers (from the left) included Agrita Groza, deputy state secretary for the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, Professor Imants Freibergs, president of the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association, Jan Peter Stromsheim, senior advisor to the Department of Education and Training and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Martin Lundo, senior advisor for Statistics Denmark, Syb Groenevald from KnowledgeLand in the Netherlands, and Loreta Križinauskienė, director of the Window to the Future alliance in Lithuania.

The E-inclusion experts roundtable featured presentations by Paul Timmers, head of the E-inclusion Unit, Directorate General for Information Society and Media, European Commission, Ina Gudele, Latvian minister with special portfolio for E-government, Dr Artis Kapenieks, director of the Distance Education Study Centre at the Rīga Technical University, and other E-inclusion experts from 15 countries in all.

eInclusion session focused on eInclusion policies and motivations of governments and citizens, new methods of work for better employment and inclusion, new social use of ICT, equal access for all, as well as international co-operation for bridging the digital divide. The session was co-organised by the Equal transnational partnership "Vit@l Society, Technology for people" and Equal project "Training in Computer and Internet Usage of Unemployed in Latvia". The session "New Social Use of ICT" was opened by Dagnija Staķe, minister of welfare, Latvia.
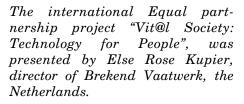

On April 7, the plenary session "New Social Use of ICT" was opened by the Latvian welfare minister, Dagnija Staķe.

An E-inclusion experts roundtable was chaired by the Latvian minister with special portfolio for E-government, Ina Gudele.

The international Equal partnership project "Vit@l Society: Technology for People", was presented by Else Rose Kupier, director of Brekend Vaatwerk, the Netherlands.

Aurinas Matulis, director of the Lithuanian government's Information Society Development Committee and action line chairman for NeDAP E-inclusion, talked about NeDAP E-inclusion Action Line activities in the Baltic region.

Stephen Howlett, chief executive of the Peabody Trust in the UK, informed the audience about the Threshold Project – how the social use of ICT breaks down labour market barriers in London.

Juris Binde, president of LMT in Latvia, talked about the subject of more effective development of mobile communications related to social capital in Latvia.

The E-health situation featured a "Virtual Hospital" which was visited by more than 100 representatives of the medical sector over the course of three days.